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# The Dead Line.

By GIDEON LAINE, D. D.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## TROUBLE IN THE CHURCH.

Minds of moderate calibre ordinarily condemn everything which is beyond their range.  
—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

You have many enemies that know not why they are so, but, like the village cures, bark when their fellows do.  
—SHAKESPEARE.

The Rev. Marshall Mason was having trouble with his church.

Twice of late he had been guilty of preaching the gospel which Christ preached—a dereliction which few orthodox churches to-day are willing to condone. The preacher is expected to confine his remarks to the "sweet bye and bye" and is not to meddle with brethren engaged in the pious task of constructing Christian wheat corners, or prayerfully occupied in evolving Christian coal trusts, in this present world. To repeat in the modern pulpit the dangerous doctrines taught by Jesus of Nazareth, and to actually insist that those doctrines shall be taken seriously now—who that believes in "business" and political economy can be expected to tolerate such unclerical conduct in the preacher he helps to pay? No clergyman need look for large returns from the gospel hat when passed to get him aid in carrying out the incendiary project of preaching the gospel as a practical message to men in this world; and no "respectable" church will long permit its hat to be used for such an improper purpose.

So Brother Mason was having trouble with the brothers and sisters of the Risington Congregational church; or, properly speaking, they were having trouble with him.

Within six years he had preached himself out of two pulpits already—one in New England, and the other in the far West—before he received a call to the struggling congregation at Risington; and he had come here with the determination of building up a congregation of workingmen and workingwomen, and of other people of liberal mind and culture. But his eloquence had induced society to make his church "fashionable;" and now, near the end of his second year, he found himself once more in a pulpit which real estate, cash, bonds and business generally, with their accustomed and accursed arrogance, sought to control. He determined to rebel and to preach the truth; and there was, therefore, as I have already twice remarked, trouble in the church.

The reader may judge of the effect of Mason's preaching from these few gems extracted from one of his sermons:

"Social and political changes often seem hopelessly slow at first, but they finally break upon the world with amazing suddenness. Events move with startling rapidity when God takes a hand in human affairs."

"Government and theology both alike appeal to fear—the most ignoble of all human sentiments. Government says, 'Obey, or you shall die!' while theology meets the doomed wretch at the foot of the scaffold and says, 'Believe, or you will be damned!' The threat of death here, the threat of damnation hereafter—these are the means by which authority and theology have compelled mankind to maintain the social hell in which we live."

"If professed Christians had been half as industrious in trying to get heaven to come to the poor as they have been in trying to get the poor to go to heaven, this world would have been a paradise long ago."

"We know very little about a next world; and when we consider what men have made of this world, we must be tempted to doubt whether an all-wise God cares to trust such creatures with another one."

The next week after Kate's journalistic efforts which had resulted in the flight of Clarence Diegal, the Rev. Marshall Mason's last sermon had, with all classes in Risington, precedence over

every other topic of conversation, and Tuesday Dan Glass said to Kate:

"Suppose you go and tackle that preacher for an interview."

"Very well. How much shall I make of it—a column?" asked Kate, who was becoming quite an expert.

"Get all out of him you can. I don't care if it crowds out everything but the ads."

Kate looked into the directory, took her note-book and pencil, and soon rang the bell at the modest cottage where the preacher lived. The door was opened by the young woman who owed her liberty to Kate's efforts, and the latter now remembered Dan Glass' remark about having received a note from a Mrs. Mason stating that she had taken charge of the young woman's babe. Entering the parlor, Kate was introduced to Mrs. Mason, a silver-haired woman, who, as Kate afterwards declared to Grace Alden, "was the sweetest-faced old lady" she had ever seen.

Mrs. Mason was surprised when told that the girlish Kate was the reporter who had so vigorously attacked, and so triumphantly vanquished, the scheming chief of police; and saying, "I must call Marshall," she went to her son's study and returned with the preacher.

"Miss Cotterell, my son, the Rev. Marshall Mason. Marshall, this young lady is the News reporter who wrote such vigorous English about the imprisonment of our young sister here."

Preacher and reporter were dumb. Each remembered, though neither mentioned, that they had met before. Kate had not entertained the slightest doubt that the Rev. Marshall Mason, about whose sermons there had been such an ado, was an elderly gentleman of the solemn-faced variety, and she had supposed that, of course, Mrs. Mason was the old clergyman's wife. But, instead of the faded old gentleman of her imagination, there stood before her the handsome young man she had seen in Judge Bolder's office that first morning in Risington, and concerning whom she had on that occasion said to Grace Alden: "He has the noblest face I have ever seen. How extraordinarily handsome he is." She was glad Grace Alden was not with her now. She found her voice at last, and, addressing him after the manner of a reporter addressing a victim, said:

"I have come to interview you, Mr. Mason. There is so much talk about your last Sunday's sermon that we wish to give our readers your views. Can you give me some account of your sermon?"

"I can give you the sermon itself, if it is not too lengthy for publication. Knowing that I was certain to be severely criticized, I requested a young friend of mine to take down the sermon in shorthand, and he has just kindly furnished me a type-written transcript. You are welcome to it if you think your paper will give so much space to the matter."

"I am instructed not to stint space, but to take all you will give us."

Who so austere as not to have relished this flattery of the press? The Rev. Marshall Mason was human, and he liked it. Mrs. Mason, who worshipped her son, beamed with delight.

"If you take the sermon," said Mason smiling, "I think you can get along for the present without an interview."

"Yes," said Kate, "we shall save the interview for another time."

Some conversation now ensued with the rescued young woman, the baby was brought in for Kate to see, and the whole ground of the recent conflict with the defenders of the weak against the strong was gone over. Then Mason asked Kate:

"Do you live in Risington, Miss Cotterell?"

"No, sir," answered Kate. "My home is at Cobden. I am here only because I found employment here."

"Cobden? What is your father's name?"

"Samuel Cotterell."

"Is he a farmer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Going to be found out again!" thought Kate. "I don't care if I am!" Only—he was the handsomest man she had ever seen.

"Lives eight or nine miles out?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you a brother named John?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pardon my impertinence, Miss Cotterell, but John and I were great friends a few years ago. I taught the school in your district and lived at your father's house one winter."

"Oh—why did I not think of it when I heard your name? The last time Brother John was home he was speaking of you and wishing he could hear from you. I should have remembered your name at once."

"You were not there that winter."

"No, I was visiting in Nebraska. My brother prophesied truly about you, Mr. Mason. He said you were a socialist, and that if you were preaching he was quite sure you would be in trouble, because you could not avoid preaching the truth."

Mason gave a hearty laugh.

"Where is John? You spoke of the last time he was home. Is he away?"

"He is at Graham City."

"Is he married?"

"Oh, no."

"What business is he engaged in at Graham?"

Poor Kate! And Mason so handsome, too. But she was almost fierce in her determination to be courageous this time.

"He is a blacksmith in the railway shops," she said boldly, almost defiantly.

"The same John still. With his ability he could have been almost any kind of a social parasite, but he used to declare that he would marry a squaw and become an adopted Indian before he would make his living from the labor of others. I remember how vehemently he used to say he was going to be a workingman or a highwayman, that he would not stoop to respectable robbery. He is a noble man. I would like to see him living easier but I am proud of his manhood. I shall write him at once and renew our old acquaintance."

Kate was delighted, and she was glad now she had spoken out. Before she left she had been persuaded to promise Mrs. Mason to attend church the next Sunday, which, as Mrs. Mason remarked, "might be Marshall's last," and then come home to dine with the preacher and his mother.

Now, my readers will imagine they know what is going to come of this. I will not say they are not guessing right; but I warn them that I am the only person who, at present, actually knows what is going to happen during the future progress of this story.

When Kate returned to the office and produced the sermon, Dan Glass exclaimed—

"Good for you! You'll do. That's a tremendous scoop. Let me see."

He reflected a moment and then dashed off this editorial paragraph:

"The News aims to be the newspaper of this city. It spares neither labor nor expense to give its readers what they expect. So much has been said about the recent discourses of the Rev. Marshall Mason that the management of the News decided to send a reporter to the Congregational church last Sunday and have the entire sermon taken down, and we shall give it to our readers to-morrow. Such things cost something, of course, but our readers can always depend upon us to get there every time. Our slow-coach morning contemporary will probably catch up with the procession in a few weeks by getting this sermon in its patent along with its ready-print three-dollar-pants advertisements. We believe in newspaper enterprise."

He read this to Kate and enquired—

"How's that for high?"

"Why, Mr. Glass, did you get a shorthand reporter to take down the sermon?"

"Not much! I didn't know there was going to be any sermon. But we've got it all the same."

"Yes, but Mr. Glass, what you have written isn't true."

"Isn't what? Do you think this is a convent? I'm running a newspaper, and do you suppose I'm going to let a chance like this to boom the News' en-

terprise slip just because I've got to lie a little bit? Wait till you've been here six months, and we'll have a real nice talk some day about newspaper ethics. I've got to go to the case and help set this stuff up. The printers can't get through with it by themselves."

"But Mr. Glass, excuse me, but what if Mr. Mason should tell that he had had the sermon taken down himself—wouldn't it put the paper in a bad light?"

"Tell? A man go around denying that he was of such public importance that a newspaper sent expressly to report what he said? Not a great deal. I've been running this great moral daily for some years, but I've never struck a cuss of that sort up to date. Besides, if he should be fool enough to want to tell, you could get him to shut up."

"But, think—"

"I'm switched if I do. I'm not going to ruin myself for a republican editor by getting into the fool habit of thinking."

"But, Mr. Glass, think—"

"I tell you I can't afford any such nonsense. Wait till you've been a journalist six months, and you'll simply laugh old Annanias to scorn. I must fall to work on this preacher's truck right away."

And he rushed into the composing room and took up a composing stick and the bits of metal began to click at a lively rate. Kate, half amused, half worried, over the audacity of Dan's prevarication in print, abandoned further remonstrance and busied herself with the proofs which awaited her correction. Her intuitive knowledge of human nature and her perception of Mason's character led her to believe that he, too, would see and enjoy the humor of Dan's audacity, rather than be offended by it, and she could not help smiling as she imagined herself telling him of her employer's practical ethics of journalism.

The sermon appeared next day as promised, and as it had its influence upon what is yet to be told, I shall insert this discourse for the reader's edification, as well as for the purpose of making clear what is to follow.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THAT SERMON.

Text:—"Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."—MATTHEW, 21: 43.

Evangelical Christians say Jesus of Nazareth was God in human form; the Unitarians say he was but a man like other men; while some outside the church entirely claim that he did not exist at all. It is my duty to preach the gospel to the whole creation, and I propose to preach it to-day to all three classes; those who say Christ was God, those who say he was a man and those who say he was a myth.

The three books known as the synoptic gospels have existed for at least fifteen hundred years. That is universally admitted. They contain certain utterances attributed to a reformer and agitator said to have flourished in Judea in the first century of our era and known to us as Jesus of Nazareth or Christ. No one acquainted with history will deny that those utterances have remarkably influenced modern progress; that some such utterances preached near the beginning of our era so changed the people of the Roman empire that, within a period not longer than that from Shakespeare to Lincoln, the cross—the most ignominious instrument of death known to Roman pride—had supplanted the imperial eagle upon the helmets and the standards of the Roman legions, and Constantine, the champion of the people who had been persecuted till then for spreading these ideas, ascended the throne of the Caesars; that these utterances revolutionized Roman law and manners, abolished slavery and put an end to the butchery of men in the Coliseum; that they evolved chivalry from the savagery of Europe; that the translation of these utterances into the language of the English people in the fourteenth century doomed serfage and villanage; that on the continent, the unchaining of these narratives resulted in the Reformation and gave rise to the modern spirit of democracy; that these sayings were the inspiration of the English revolution of 1641 and the French revolution of 1789, and that they dictated the opening sentences of the Declaration of Independence—that